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FIGHTING YOUR EGO IN TIMES OF CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

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No matter how much confidence we feel most of the time, we will all be hit with periods when we suffer from self-doubt. Perhaps, you begin doubting yourself from a trigger you didn't even know you had, or maybe that constructive criticism really got to you this time. If we're not careful, we can get defensive and maybe even unintentionally cruel if we allow our ego to have the better of us.

To help fight your ego and allow your confidence to shine through no matter the circumstances, it's important to realize why you are feeling the way you are feeling. In my experiences, the main reason I have felt defensive in periods of uncertainty has been because I was hurt. Perhaps, someone came to have a very hard conversation with me that I wasn't ready for. Or at times, I may be feeling very proud of something that others just don't appreciate in the same way. But it's not up to them to be responsible for my feelings. In fact, I appreciate when my friends come to me with hard news. I would rather know something than be kept out of the loop.

So, when faced with these hard times, when our ego comes out in a negative way, we need to recognize why it's happening. Likely, it's because you've been hurt. Most of the time, it's because we are disappointed, whether in ourselves for not living up to the expectations of others, or with others for not feeling the same way that we do about something.

Like everyone, I go through this from time to time, and my first reaction to hard conversations or criticism is to get angry or immediately defensive because I feel hurt. The most important thing we can do in this circumstance, however, is to fight our natural instincts to defend ourselves and, instead, approach the situation with grace.

How do we do that? Well, when I begin to feel this way, I find that it helps for me to take a few minutes to myself to meditate. I excuse myself if I need to, breath, and run through the circumstances in my brain, usually from Focus 10, as I find I can be more grounded in that focus level. I find it is imperative to recognize the following:

1. Most of the time, if someone we love has given us hard news or constructive criticism, it's hard for them, too. They don't want to hurt your feelings. In fact, they have your best interests in mind.

2. They're coming from a place where they want you to succeed. What they're saying to you is for your best interest to help you improve, even if you don't feel that way in the moment.

3. If you respond poorly, they are less likely to be honest with you in the future. Do you really want that?

4. How can you use this information to improve? Self-growth is always an important goal to have, and sometimes, when we are the most hurt, through that pain, we grow the most.

This especially applies with our partners and closer personal relationships. Whenever I have a hard conversation with my partner or a friend, I always start the conversation in a way where I try to remove my ego from out of it. My husband knows now that when I need to have a serious conversation, I approach him and ask him to remove his ego from the room, so we can have a heart to heart. If I see him get defensive or if I start to get defensive, we agree to finish the conversation once we have calmed down and take have taken the emotion out of a situation.

And, the more natural confidence you have, the less you will have to fight your ego. I find that a hurt ego pushes you to lash out in circumstances when your confidence is low. With confidence comes an understanding that everyone has an opinion, and you don't need to see eye to eye all the time. With confidence in your decisions, you become a stronger, more fulfilled person, overall.

One way I've found to build my confidence is to conduct add a quick confidence-boosting activity into my daily meditation. In this time, I focus on, first, what I'm grateful for, and next, what I'm most proud of in my life that I've accomplished. By living in those positive feelings daily, I've felt more protected from my ego and more naturally confident in myself.

Remember, there is always a balance between confidence and pride, but by finding that delicate line in your meditation, you can live a more confident life while fighting with your ego less and less.